

March 10, 2009

Mr. William Harold Jones, Chair  
State Board of Education  
P.O. Box 282  
Petal, MS 39465

Dear Mr. Jones:

I want to commend you and the other members of the Board for your courage and commitment to raising the bar for Mississippi students by using national standards for our new curriculum and assessment system. You have put public education in Mississippi on the right path and it seems to me implementing an Accountability Model also based on national standards is the logical next step.

As a parent and educator it pains me each time I see or hear about Mississippi being last on most all national measurements and assessments. We have taken a beating on this for years to the unfortunate extent that our educational system – administrators students and communities – are now victims of a culture of “low expectations.” I fear that, deep down, some members of our educational community do not believe our kids can compete with kids from other states. Each time we try to improve the system, as you are currently doing, these nay-sayers begin making excuses and rationalizing why we should not raise the bar. It is a fact in life that you only get what you expect. The excellent education leaders, teachers and students never get a chance to rise to the challenge because a small group of folks brings pressure to slow or stop change to our “comfortable yet inadequate system.”

Over the past several years the Board has painstakingly put together the tools for districts to be successful in educating their students, and one of the major ones is a new curriculum and assessment system built on national standards. If you take the next step be implementing the new Accountability Model, you can be assured that Mississippi’s student achievement performance will be greatly enhanced.

I appreciate the opportunity to express my feelings on the proposed new Model and know that you and the Board will make a good decision. I urge you to please make your decision based on what is best for Mississippi and her students, not what is comfortable or politically expedient for some adults.

Sincerely,

Johnny Franklin  
Education Policy Advisor